TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS

Category: Subcategory:	**ITC Number:** ITC-Web-0504 If Approved in January **Name: File formats**
Definition:	Text material posted to a web site, and text files made available for download from the site, may be created in a variety of file formats. The most universally-available formats should be used for web access.
Justification:	To better serve the citizens of West Virginia, State agencies should prepare materials for the web in formats that those citizens are most likely to be able to access.
Specifications:	In the interest of maximum accessibility to state government information, documents posted to West Virginia state government web sites should be in plain text or HTML-formatted text (including HTML-formatted forms) whenever possible. When exceptions occur, the favored text document format is Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format (PDF).
Recommendations:	**File Formats** The choice of file formats used should be based on the following considerations: (1) the intended use of the files by the target audience, (2) the accessibility of the format to the target audience, and (3) the level of effort required to convert the material to the format. In the interest of making information readily available to as wide an audience as possible, web servers should avoid making information available only in proprietary file formats (e.g., WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, SAS, Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format, etc.), except in cases where the target audience commonly has access to such formats. Links to files in proprietary or unusual formats should be explicitly noted. Material intended to be 'viewed', read, or browsed online should be prepared in HTML format (for text and tables) and GIF (for graphics). JPEG format may be used instead of GIF for photographic material where there is a need to preserve a large number of colors. Portable document formats, such as Adobe Acrobat, should not be used as the primary format unless converting the material to HTML

is not feasible. Although it is easier in many instances to create PDF than HTML, there are drawbacks: the contents of PDF files are not included in site-wide full-text search indexes, PDF viewers are not embedded in most web browsers, and PDF viewers require more powerful hardware for on-line viewing than a web browser alone. PDF files should be created in Acrobat version 5 or greater for its improved accessibility tools.

Material intended to be downloaded for off-line print or display should be prepared in one of the following formats, which are listed in descending order of preference:

1. HTML and GIF or JPEG -- Same as materials for on-line viewing.

2. Adobe Acrobat (.PDF), etc. -- Include link to downloadable free viewer.

3. Rich Text Format (.RTF) -- RTF is easily created from most word processors and is more widely usable than native word processor formats such as Microsoft Word or WordPerfect. However, its reproduction of fonts and page layout can vary depending on the user's font set.

4. Proprietary formats (e.g., WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.) should only be used if: (a) conversion to one of the above formats is not feasible; (b) the intended audience is known to have ready access to software which can handle the proprietary format; or © the intended use is data analysis or manipulation (see below). If use of a proprietary format is unavoidable, use an earlier, more widely available version if possible.

Material in formats other than HTML should be linked to an HTML page which describes the material in such a way that users of site-wide full-text search facilities can find material of interest.

PDF's

Requirements for the Use of PDF as Sole Online Source of State Information.

1. The reader is available free for all platforms

2. It can be used both online and offline (standalone)

3. PDF files can be read online, or downloaded and saved to the user's computer.

4. PDF technology is constantly advancing, has a good history of development, and is used by more companies than other technologies

Next, when should a PDF be used as the ONLY online source of the information or material?

1. When State Law requires that the material be available in an un-editable format

2. When the material must look like the paper document

3. When the document is a form that must be filled out a certain way

For images used in PDF's – convert to .jpg to avoid pixilation.

There may be certain situations when an agency wants to post a file in a specific software format. For instance, if an agency wants to make available a spreadsheet file with formulas embedded, so that the user can download the file and make calculations offline, the agency will want to post that file. If possible, it should save the file in a format one generation back from the latest version. If the file makes use of features only available in the latest version, then availability of the file takes precedence over maximum accessibility.

Deleted: In the above example, a Quattro Pro 8 file should be saved as version 7, so that it can be opened by the latest versions of Quattro, Excel and Lotus.

Large or Complex Documents
Large documents (greater than five pages) should be organized into sections or chapters and linked together. If the material is to be read consecutively, then a table of contents and division by chapter may be most appropriate. If the material is to be accessed randomly, then a division by section with key word links to appropriate sections may be best. To assist users in navigating sectioned documents, each page should include a navigation menu that allows the user to logically progress through the document. Links to files larger than 100 kilobytes should include an explicit note of the file size.

- Area -

☑ Internet/Intranet ☐ Network ☐ Operating ☐ Data Standard ☐ Security

List Keyword or Metadata:	File Formats, PDF, HTML, Web, Internet

Provide the Status of this technology area: ☑ Under Review ☐ Rejected ☐ Accepted

Audit Trail

Creation Date:	10/25/04	**Date Accepted/Rejected By Standards:**	12/1/04	**Date Accepted/Rejected By ITC:**	
Reason for Rejection:					
Last Date Updated:		**Date Last Reviewed:**			
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Update:	
Updated By:	
Web Location:	Please Add
Purchasing Standard:		Date of Purchasing Standard:	